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New York

President:	Mr. Akram	(Pakistan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	Chile	Mr. Maquieira
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Guinea	Mr. Traoré
	Mexico	Mr. Pujalte
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Spain	Ms. Menendez
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. King
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

Response to the humanitarian situation in Iraq.

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03-36770 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 11.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Response to the humanitarian situation in Iraq

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

It is so decided.

I invite the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Mr. Mark Malloch Brown, to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of any objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Mr. James Morris.

It is so decided.

I invite the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Mr. James Morris, to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of any objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. David Nabarro, Executive Director of Sustainable Development and Healthy Environments and Senior Policy Adviser to the Director-General of the World Health Organization.

It is so decided.

I invite the Executive Director of Sustainable Development and Healthy Environments and Senior Policy Adviser to the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Mr. David Nabarro, to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of any objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Nils Kastberg, Director of Emergency Programmes of the United Nations Children's Fund.

It is so decided.

I invite the Director of Emergency Programmes of the United Nations Children's Fund, Mr. Nils Kastberg, to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of any objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jakob Kellenberger, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

It is so decided.

I invite the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Jakob Kellenberger, to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Mark Malloch Brown, Mr. James Morris, Mr. David Nabarro, Mr. Nils Kastberg and Mr. Jakob Kellenberger.

At the end of those briefings, I will give the floor to Council members who wish to make comments or ask questions.

I wish to inform Council members that, due to the late start of this meeting, it is my intention to adjourn at 1 p.m. and to reconvene at 3 p.m. to continue our consideration of the item. I regret any inconvenience this may cause to any of our participants, including our distinguished guests.

I welcome the presence of the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette, and I invite her to take the floor.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I would like to begin by expressing our sorrow over the heavy loss of life, injuries and destruction caused by the powerful earthquake that struck Algeria yesterday. We extend our condolences to the families of the deceased and to the Government of Algeria.

The United Nations is prepared to assist in any way it can. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has already provided an emergency cash grant of $50,000. A United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team has been deployed to support the Algerian Government in coordinating the international response and to assist in assessing priority needs. The United Nations has also contacted several Governments, which have put search and rescue teams and relief supplies on standby to support the efforts of the Algerian Government.

Mr. President, I wish to thank you for this opportunity to provide an update on the humanitarian situation in Iraq and the activities of the United Nations on the ground.

Following my remarks, as you have indicated, Sir, my colleagues from the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund will brief the Council. The Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Kenzo Oshima, who has just returned from Baghdad, is also with us today. All of them will be pleased to respond to questions.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Jakob Kellenberger, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). He and his colleagues did outstanding work during the conflict in Iraq and will continue to be our close partners in the crucial period ahead.

Let me start by stressing the strong commitment of the United Nations system to fulfilling the humanitarian, reconstruction and other mandates assigned to it in the resolution that the Council has just adopted. The humanitarian situation in Iraq remains very serious. The breakdown of essential services and law and order has resulted in a range of urgent needs. A major humanitarian crisis has been averted so far. But the civilian population, and children in particular, remain at risk, particularly if the security situation does not improve substantially in the near future.

United Nations agencies are at work throughout the country, providing food, water, medicine and other emergency assistance. They have helped repair water and sanitation facilities, assisted in the restoration of electricity and provided relief to internally displaced persons and malnourished children.

I would like to pay special tribute to the courage and commitment of our 3,400 national staff, who continued to deliver essential supplies to hospitals, displaced populations and other vulnerable groups throughout the period of conflict.

The ability of the United Nations to respond rapidly and effectively from the outset of the crisis was greatly enhanced by a range of preparedness measures. Inter-agency coordination resulted in joint planning and an integrated plan. Substantial quantities of humanitarian supplies were prepositioned inside Iraq and in several neighbouring countries. Iraq's neighbours have also been helpful in ensuring the swift transit of supplies through five main access corridors.

Since international staff started returning to Iraq one month ago, we have continued to expand our presence. More than 300 international staff have been deployed, with teams positioned in all five subregions. And, as authorized by the Council, the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission has provided a wide range of support and services to United Nations agencies on their return to the country.

The Humanitarian Coordinator and the Area Coordinators have been holding regular meetings with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In addition, sectoral coordination groups have been set up in priority areas with the involvement of relevant ministries, other Iraqi authorities, and representatives of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance. Coordination with the latter Office in particular, and with military authorities, is crucial for ensuring both an effective humanitarian response and the safety and security of humanitarian staff.

The overarching priority of virtually all our assistance efforts is the reactivation of essential public services. This includes not only health services, electricity and water supply, but also the public distribution system for food, on which much of the population depends for their survival. United Nations agencies are working in full support of the relevant Iraqi national authorities.

One major constraint on public service providers has been the inability to pay salaries and other running costs. One-off payments of $20 have been made in some locations, and we are encouraged by indications that a regular system of salary payments to public sector employees will begin shortly.

The other problem, of course, has been the looting of a large number of essential public facilities. This leads me naturally to the question of security and law and order. The general lack of law and order has had a wide variety of humanitarian consequences. Ministries, water treatment plants, hospitals and warehouses have been devastated. Many facilities were repaired or restocked only to be looted again a few days later. Security concerns also include unexploded ordnance, which threatens the civilian population, particularly children, and impedes transport and a resumption of normal agricultural activities.

The very fear of violence in many areas is making it more difficult, and often impossible, to deliver drugs and other essential supplies, and is preventing people from going to work. We have also had first-hand reports about women who are afraid to go outside, and especially about girls who are afraid to return to school.

Such insecurity is also a major impediment to humanitarian assistance activities. With the movement of our staff limited in many urban areas, they cannot reach people in need. Personnel of several NGOs have been attacked in cities and on the main roads to Baghdad.

The threat of violence has also resulted in population movements, such as the displacement of Iraqi Arabs from several areas. Such displacements highlight, yet again, the vulnerability of civilians in conflict and post-conflict environments to human rights violations and other threats. United Nations agencies, under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator, and working with the ICRC and NGOs, have drawn up a protection framework for internally displaced persons, returning refugees and other civilians at risk.

Finally, I would like to say a word about Iraq's cultural heritage. The destruction and looting that occurred in Baghdad and at archaeological sites, historic buildings, monuments and museums around the country was a tragedy. International experts working under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization have just visited Baghdad and are now finalizing their report. We are all strongly committed to working with Iraqis and all others concerned to protect and rehabilitate the country's cultural heritage and to fight the illicit traffic in cultural property.

Our ability to respond to the urgent needs I have outlined depends greatly on whether the necessary resources will be available. To date, more than $700 million has been received in response to our flash appeal, and I would like to thank donors for their generosity.

Moreover, as implementation of Security Council resolution 1472 (2003) continues, the Office of the Iraq Programme and United Nations agencies have confirmed that nearly $1 billion worth of priority humanitarian supplies can be shipped by 3 June. As a result of the resolution that the Council has adopted today, additional priority supplies will be made available to the Iraqi people.

At the same time, there remain significant gaps in funding for key priorities such as the re-establishment of the health system, nutrition programmes, water facilities and restoring the education system.

As United Nations agencies continue to expand their presence in Iraq, they are conducting comprehensive assessments that will enable us to re-prioritize our response plans. Based on these new assessments, we will be launching a revised humanitarian appeal in the second half of June.

In conclusion, let me stress that the United Nations and its agencies, funds and programmes are committed to doing their utmost to help the people of Iraq in their time of need.

The President: I now give the floor to the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Mr. Mark Malloch Brown.

Mr. Malloch Brown: Mr. President, thank you for the invitation to address the Council today. If I may, I will divide my brief remarks into two: first, a description of what the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is doing in partnership with the other agencies represented here today in the humanitarian area, and then a word about our thoughts on reconstruction planning, an area of activity that we can perhaps now move into more fully after the happy passage this morning of the Security Council resolution 1483 (2003).

First, with respect to the humanitarian area, we are working very closely with all the agencies here, as well as with non-governmental organizations. Let me salute, as the Deputy Secretary-General did, our friends and colleagues in the International Committee of the

Red Cross for their heroic effort throughout the conflict. I also salute my colleagues in the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) for their extraordinary activities in recent weeks.

We, too, have UNDP teams deployed in Baghdad, Basra and the three northern governorates. We are now deploying staff to Mosul and Kirkuk. Therefore, at the moment we are running a rather decentralized operation. In fact, we have the most difficulty in our Baghdad operation, where looting and heavy damage to our offices have required us to invest deeply and quickly in restoring our operational capacities there.

In Iraq, unlike in the rest of the world, the UNDP happens to be deeply involved in the electricity sector, having carried out, under the oil for food programme, responsibilities in building the electricity grid in northern Iraq. That has allowed us to move that capacity quickly to other parts of the country to attempt to restore critical emergency electricity supplies, in particular to allow water plants, sewage treatment plants, hospitals and other medical facilities to resume operations. We work closely with UNICEF and WHO in this. We have dispatched assessment missions to key locations to try to see what we can do to help restore generation and distribution facilities in the north, south and centre of the country. We very much want to thank the United Kingdom for the financial support that makes this emergency electricity work possible.

We are also involved in dredging the port of Umm Qasr, where, through the support of the Government of Japan, we have put in place an emergency dredging project to support the World Food Programme's capacity to deliver food shipments. The actual dredging works will start on 26 May and allow over a four week period the dredging of that part of the port that is receiving food aid and other humanitarian assistance. That will allow vessels of up to 50,000 tons to offload, which is currently not possible.

Let me also say that activities in each of these areas have been accelerated by access to contracts under the oil for food programme, which has given us both extra support in the dredging area and key components for electricity and other sectors.

We have also started work on emergency employment generation, imitating a very successful project we have had in Afghanistan for quick employment generation after conflict. A component of that programme is just getting under way in Baghdad, again with the support of the Government of Japan. That support was announced just yesterday. We also have activities in mine action and other areas. I would like to thank again those Governments that have come forward to support those activities.

Let me now, if I may, just say a word about reconstruction and recovery planning. As so many of you in the Council informally urged me, I sought to make sure through the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) that we as a system would be ready when the mandate came to move beyond humanitarian assistance to reconstruction and recovery planning. We have been deeply engaged with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on planning needs assessment activities, bringing both those two organizations up to speed in terms of providing them with detailed economic, financial and project data to shortcut their own planning and preparation processes. We have been discussing with them, as well as through the UNDG and all of our fellow agencies, how we could quickly mount needs assessment activities for reconstruction in the field once that became possible.

As well, with the Government of Norway, we are preparing for a major assessment of current living standards, a nationwide data collection activity and household survey to identify more clearly the reconstruction needs of Iraqis throughout the country.

I just want to assure the Council that the humanitarian operation, as you will hear from others, is well and truly under way and that, as we have always made clear, it was in no way contingent on a resolution such as the one passed this morning. But now that this morning's resolution is in place, I, through the UNDG and under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, plan to move quickly to put in place the planning and needs assessment process for reconstruction.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. James Morris, Executive Director of the World Food Programme.

Mr. Morris: On 11 May, I travelled to Baghdad to review first-hand the progress of the operations of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Iraq and to hold meetings with senior members of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Affairs, the Ministry of Trade, which is overseeing the Iraqi food distribution system, and United Nations colleagues. I

am pleased to report to the Council that tremendous progress has been made. The WFP has already delivered more than 200,000 metric tonnes of food — 3,800 truckloads — using five different logistics corridors through Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Iran and Kuwait. In addition, a shipment of WFP rice has moved through the port of Umm Qasr. And once the dredging by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other work is completed, that port will become a major entry point for the World Food Programme.

All those deliveries are gearing up to WFP's largest humanitarian operation ever. Our objective is to ensure that 480,000 metric tonnes of food a month are available to feed all 27 million Iraqis through their existing public food distribution system for a period of five months. At the conclusion of that five-month period, we plan that an Iraqi authority will be able to take over. During this operation, we will distribute 2.5 million tonnes of food — that is 48,000 truckloads — at a total cost of $1.85 billion.

Resources for this operation so far have come both from the donor community — in fact, we have received support from more than 30 countries — and from food supplies available under the oil for food programme. WFP staff have been working hard to renegotiate food contracts under the provisions of Security Council resolutions 1472 (2003) and 1476 (2003). I am pleased to inform the Council that we have now identified a total of $947 million worth of food items from the oil for food programme, including their transport and distribution costs, which will be used towards this emergency operation. With those resources and existing in-country stocks, distributions have already begun to hospitals, social institutions and those who had not received their complete advance rations earlier. Full distributions to the entire population will commence on 1 June through the 44,000 food agents placed all across Iraq. Advanced rations provided by the Government before the conflict supplied families with two months of provisions, and with the restoration of the public distribution system we are confident we can avoid any serious hunger among Iraqis. Today, there is no food crisis in Iraq.

That being said, we still face a number of immediate challenges. First and foremost is the issue of security for staff, warehouses, silos, mills and offices. I raised this issue in Baghdad and was pleased to hear that it is considered to be the absolute, number-one top priority. Other pressing issues include the payment of salaries for Ministry of Trade staff implementing the public distribution system, as well as the provision of water, fuel and electricity supplies to mills in Iraq so they can produce wheat flour.

Another pressing concern is the protection of Iraq's cereal harvest, estimated this year at some 1.7 million tonnes of wheat and barley. The harvest began last week and will continue into June. The Iraqi Ministry of Trade has traditionally purchased the local crop through a network of Grain Board buying centres spread throughout the production areas. In previous years, farmers have been offered a fixed price of some $75 per tonne of wheat, taking into consideration that they have also received subsidized seeds, fertilizers and pesticides from the Government. By way of comparison, the cost of importing wheat into Iraq is over $200 per tonne.

The World Food Programme has set aside funds from the 13 per cent account and is further developing a project proposal to procure some 1 million tonnes of wheat locally in Iraq using United Nations escrow account funds, as provided for under resolution 1472 (2003). We will, in fact, pay the local farmers $105 per tonne. For this project to be successful, we need the immediate re-establishment of the administration of the Grain Board. This will require payment of salaries and replacement of looted weight scales, bagging equipment and office equipment, as well as security and currency arrangements for large-scale cash disbursements, given the absence of banking facilities.

WFP has supported the procurement and delivery of food commodities for public distribution during this time of upheaval in Iraq, and we look forward to handing over these responsibilities as a new administration comes online. The importance of the food ration provided under this system cannot be overstated during this time of transition. The entire population of Iraq depends on the rations to some degree, and 60 per cent of Iraqis who are dependent on the rations as their sole source of income sell part of them to pay for other household needs. As such, until there is political stability and broad economic recovery which benefits all sections of Iraqi society, the food rations will continue to provide basic household food security and act as a stabilizing force in this volatile period.

At the same time, Iraq is a nation of tremendous potential wealth and resources. With the restoration of a functioning economy, it will eventually be able to make the transition from heavily subsidized food rations towards a market food economy. As it does so, it will be critical to maintain a safety net for the vulnerable and food insecure, especially young children, in areas where we have seen unusually high malnutrition rates. The population requiring a safety net would at the outset be very large. However, it would shrink over time as more and more economic opportunities became available. The World Food Programme has developed considerable expertise in supporting the development of a safety-net system. Should it be called upon to do so, the World Food Programme stands ready to provide its expertise and capacity in this area to assist the Iraqi people.

The President: I thank the Executive Director of the World Food Programme for his statement.

I now give the floor to Mr. David Nabarro, Executive Director of Sustainable Development and Health Environments and Senior Policy Adviser to the Director General of the World Health Organization.

Mr. Nabarro: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and other Council members, for giving me the opportunity to be here. I bring greetings from Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), who is unable to be here because she is presiding over our annual assembly, which is currently under way.

I am going to present a short version of a longer statement which I hope will be accessible to Council members, prepared for this occasion by the World Health Organization's teams in Iraq and surrounding countries.

When the World Health Organization assessed the health situation of the people in Iraq at the beginning of this year, we concluded that they faced the mix of health hazards that are generally associated with longstanding deprivation. Children, women, the elderly and disabled people, and the 5 per cent of the population with chronic illness — heart and kidney disease, cancer and diabetes — were especially vulnerable. Such people accounted for about 20 million out of the total population of 25 million.

Those people were heavily dependent on the functioning health services that were provided by more than 1,400 medical facilities, of which 160 were hospitals and 1,200 were health centres, and by several thousand doctors. Through the oil for food programme, systems for the procurement, distribution and availability of medical supplies were in place and were funded, and health services were well used.

But daily reports to the World Health Organization's headquarters from many parts of Iraq now give cause for concern, particularly as this is an important time of transition for that country. As has been said by others, in terms of risks to people, property and movement, the security situation hampers access to and provision of all basic services — water, sanitation and electricity, and, of course, medical and public health.

But even in situations that are secure, the power vacuum means that Government workers in hospitals and health centres who really want to work do not know who should direct them. They do not know what is expected of them; they do not know whether they have any likelihood of long-term employment. Indeed, in some places we have the problem of hospitals being taken over by neighbourhood groups and not really functioning in the way that they are designed to do.

The absolute lack of cash to meet the running costs of services — particularly food for patients, cleaning services, refuse disposal from the hospitals, and to enable staff to receive the remuneration they need — undermines the capacity of all institutions to offer essential health care to people who need it. As a result, therefore, Iraqis are unable to access the health care services that they need for the treatment of chronic conditions, as well as acute needs. Services, in our judgement, are running at between 20 per cent and 40 per cent of their pre-war capacity. Public health systems are not working as they should, and the threat of cholera, tuberculosis, malaria, leishmaniasis, measles and, now, whooping cough, is always there.

For some weeks now we have made strenuous efforts to catalyse a restarting of the health services. We have been working through WHO national staff in Iraq, who continued operating throughout the war. We have also been working in close cooperation with our colleagues in the International Committee of the Red Cross, to whom I would like to pay tribute again today, as well as many other non-governmental organizations and other parts of the United Nations system, especially the United Nations Children's Fund.

We have worked in support of national authorities in Baghdad and in the governorates. We have really quite a complicated and decentralized operation. We have given priority to restarting essential hospital services, disease surveillance, medicine distribution systems and the capacity to run the services within individual governorates. Together with national counterparts, we have been working out what funds are needed for staff supplies and basic utilities, looking at a six-month period of transition. We have been finding ways to move these monies to the hospitals and to ensure that the funds are properly used. We have joined together the emerging mechanisms for coordinating actors for health in different parts of the country so that all the different contributions that the actors are making are well used and can build on national capacities, whether in the south, in Baghdad, in the centre or in the north.

We have made an effort to match available supplies to needs, identifying 115 oil for food contracts at a value of $130 million, speeding them up so that they are delivered where they are needed, and adding another 30 additional contracts for essential goods under resolutions 1472 (2003) and 1476 (2003), so that we can bridge the gap until new systems are established.

There will be a need for funds to get essential services back even to their pre-war level. An amount of about $20 million a month is needed to get them in place. Although we have received some very generous contributions for health in Iraq from some of the countries that have already been mentioned, it is not enough. Frankly, it is much less than what will be needed for the eventual budget for a functioning health service in Iraq.

We hope that, as the new Development Fund and systems that have been agreed upon this morning are put in place, a proportion of those funds can be made available for the essential running costs of basic services during the transition, and that that can be done in a way that does not unduly drain the available international funds for the huge number of health crises already under way in other parts of the world. Of course, in the long term we expect that the country of Iraq will be able to afford a good-quality, equitable health service without external assistance.

We now look forward to moving ahead — working with the new authorities and coordinating the various actors who are involved in health care on the ground — to restart health services in all governorates so that the people of Iraq can access the medical care and public health they not only need, but also deserve.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Nils Kastberg, Director of Emergency Programmes of the United Nations Children's Fund.

Mr. Kastberg: My full statement, as well as a brief on our work, will be available to members. I will therefore not go through the full, detailed statement.

Let me thank you, Mr. President, for inviting the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to participate in this meeting. I apologize on behalf of Ms. Carol Bellamy, our Executive Director, who happens, Sir, to be in your country today and who has visited various parts of Iraq in the last four days. She has sent us her observations, about which I will speak.

As many of my United Nations colleagues present here have done, let me start by mentioning the high priority we place upon the need for law and order throughout Iraq. The ability of United Nations staff to be able to reach those most in need is still severely compromised by the development of a culture of lawlessness and fear and its impact on children, especially girls. We see this issue as overriding in its impact. I will make some comments in that regard later in my statement.

Under the overall coordination of the United Nations, getting all children back in school as soon as possible is a paramount priority for us. Eighty per cent of Iraq's 8,500 primary school facilities have re-opened. We have delivered hundreds of school-in-a-box kits, as we call them. We are committed to delivering enough kits to supply all 3.5 million primary-school-age children with learning supplies by September.

We must nevertheless be vigilant. In the south and centre of the country school attendance rates remain well below the already low pre-war average of 75 per cent. Many people are reluctant to send their children, especially girls, to school through potentially dangerous situations.

Another aspect that we would like to highlight relates to the situation of women. Iraqi women lost a lot of ground under the sanctions in terms of their participation in social, economic and political life. A reborn Iraq will be one in which Iraqi women must

drive the reconstruction process. It would be a great disservice to Iraq if its women were to be kept in their homes out of fear.

Restarting education empowers communities, makes an immediate difference in the lives of children and parents and builds a civil society. It is for that reason that we would like to advocate for having children return to school as quickly as possible.

Another high priority is to provide basic health care for children and women, in which we collaborate with our colleagues around this table — including with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Committee of the Red Cross — and with many non-governmental organizations.

Last week, a rapid nutritional assessment carried out by UNICEF local staff in Baghdad found that acute malnutrition had nearly doubled, from 4 per cent one year ago to almost 8 per cent today. We are not surprised. Wasting in children is related not only to how much they have to eat, but also to their bodies' ability to retain what is eaten. When not properly treated, diarrhoea leads to the loss of nutrients in the body, to dehydration and, all too often, to death. Doctors in Baghdad and in the north of the country told Ms. Bellamy this week that some 90 per cent of the children being brought to hospitals are now suffering from this affliction.

We therefore currently need decent water and sanitation throughout Iraq. We are involved in that effort. We are currently providing 2 million litres of water per day by tanker trucks to the south of the country. We are establishing generating plants and pumping equipment in many areas, as well as supplying hospitals and other institutions with water.

We also need certain policy decisions to be taken. If taken soon, such decisions could yield quick and positive results. One example of that pertains to infant feeding. Breast-milk substitutes, which were included by the former Government of Iraq in the oil-for-food basket, are actually killing children when mixed with contaminated water. We believe that food supplies for children must continue. However, we strongly urge that breast-milk substitutes be dropped. They should be available on the market and for doctors to prescribe as needed, but they should not be promoted for inclusion in the food basket. We are giving high priority to working with our WHO and other partners to promote breastfeeding as the optimal solution to protect the health of children.

Also in the area of health, we have launched a national campaign to prevent measles. We have also begun to provide therapeutic feeding in various places, which we believe is making a difference.

The worrying condition of Iraq's children indicates that addressing child malnutrition in a comprehensive manner that includes water and sanitation requires particular attention in the recovery effort.

The protection of civilians and the protection of women against violence are also high on our agenda. We seek to protect children from abuse and exploitation, including sexual exploitation. We know that many children have been brought into armed gangs or have joined groups of street children and are using drugs. As the Deputy Secretary-General mentioned, we also know that children are being hurt and killed by landmines. In Baghdad alone there are about 800 hazardous sites, the majority related to cluster bombs and caches of dumped ammunition.

We are committed to supporting the reconstruction effort by supporting efforts to protect vulnerable children in Iraq in areas such as juvenile justice, community rehabilitation and mine awareness and removal, as well as in providing direct protection, as is the case with the Palestinian children who have been driven out of their homes who are being assisted in the outskirts of Baghdad.

These are some of the priorities that we believe are extremely important for Iraq's children: law and order; a return to a positive learning environment; basic water, sanitation, health services and nutrition care; and the protection of vulnerable children. We are already heavily engaged in that effort with committed staff. We believe we can work with communities in Iraq, in which the Iraqi people themselves form a cadre of educated, well trained, competent and committed people. We believe that Iraqis from all ethnic, linguistic, political and geographical backgrounds can be unified by making the well-being of children a national priority.

So powerful is the pull of supporting and helping children that, immediately after the war, when the looting and burning of Baghdad was at its height, UNICEF's national staff dug into their own pockets

and pulled together $95,000 to keep our office and programme running. In fact, it was for only three days that our office did not operate. Allow me to suggest, on behalf of Ms. Bellamy, that the world follow their example and commit to improving the immediate and long-term future of Iraq by investing in its children.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Jakob Kellenberger, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Kellenberger: I thank you, Sir, for the invitation to share with Council members how the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been responding to the humanitarian situation in Iraq.

I should like to start by highlighting two factors which played a defining role in shaping ICRC's response to the recent conflict in Iraq. The first is that ICRC has been active in Iraq without interruption since 1980, with bases in Baghdad, Basra and the North, where it has pursued both protection and assistance activities. Concretely, protection work has meant visits to and repatriation of prisoners of war from the Iraq-Iran conflict, as well as the search for information on people unaccounted for from the 1990-1991 Gulf War. In terms of assistance, it is particularly relevant to note that support for medical structures, hospitals and health-care centres alike, has been at the forefront of our priorities for the past four years. The same applies to water and sanitation projects. ICRC was therefore pretty familiar with the country's health and water adduction and processing systems well before 20 March this year.

Secondly, in October last year, our institution decided to increase its response capabilities in and around Iraq. The decision of principle was also taken to keep core teams of expatriate staff inside Iraq in the event of a war. Moreover, a careful review process has led us to the conclusion that, regardless of military developments, deficiencies in the health-care delivery and water adduction systems were likely to be issues of critical concern to the civilian population. In addition, it was evident that the outbreak of a full-fledged conflict would require ICRC to step up its protection work, notably by visiting prisoners of war and civilian internees. In other words, we concluded that the existing operational priorities were likely to keep, if not increase, their relevance. The course of events validated our choices.

During the war, ICRC supported hospitals and health centres and effected emergency repairs on the water supply systems. As regards protection, ICRC delegates have so far visited over 7,000 prisoners of war and civilian internees. Over 6,000 have been released in the meantime. Efforts to gain access to all other interned persons are ongoing.

There were also limits, both security- and staff-related, to the activities carried out by ICRC during the most intense phase of fighting. Whereas ICRC could carry out emergency work in Baghdad, the Basra region and the North during the most intense phase of fighting, it had no access to major cities between Basra and Baghdad, such as Nasiriyah, Karbala and Najaf.

I would now like to say a few words about our present and future priorities in Iraq. These priorities will include, as may be expected from ICRC, visits to all persons deprived of their liberty; the protection of vulnerable groups, such as separated and unaccompanied children, the sick and wounded, internally displaced persons and minority groups; the re-establishment of family links; the prevention and resolution of issues of persons unaccounted for in relation to the present and past conflicts and violence; emergency repair and rehabilitation of vital structures, such as water, health and sewage facilities; the provision of medical emergency consumables and equipment; assistance to and support for public health structures; emergency food and non-food assistance to vulnerable populations; and awareness-raising activities related to explosive remnants of war and landmines. ICRC is presently fielding nearly 100 international and 450 Iraqi staff to implement this programme.

ICRC, as lead agency of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in Iraq, is also coordinating the activities of the national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in that country. Representatives of 33 different societies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies met on the premises of the ICRC delegation in Baghdad just 10 days ago.

When it comes to assessing the current humanitarian situation, it is essential to understand that it cannot be dissociated from the security context or from the current dysfunction of key administrative structures. ICRC drew the attention of the coalition and of the international community to this fact at an early

stage — for example, in a public appeal I made on 11 April. Improving security and establishing functioning administrative structures so that people can go back to work and get paid remain top priorities. In fact, when I visited Baghdad in early May, that was my main message. ICRC remains concerned by the security situation in Baghdad and other parts of the country. Various incidents in recent days further show that main roads remain unsafe.

An early analysis, based on our field experience, that Iraq was not faced with a general humanitarian catastrophe seems now to be widely shared. However, three considerations should be borne in mind. First, things could still go wrong if security is not improved. More has to be done. Secondly, there are urgent humanitarian needs in specific sectors. Thirdly, beyond humanitarian emergencies, there are immense needs for repair and upgrades of infrastructures, in particular in the health and water sectors.

If there is, in our assessment, no major lack of dry food at present, people are lacking fresh food, not so much because of a lack of supply, but because of a lack of money to buy. It is good news to hear that the payment of salaries or other financial incentives has now started in various places. We also understand that the lack of fuel in some parts of the country sometimes makes difficult the transportation of staff from different institutions or can reduce supply lines.

A systematic evaluation of needs by ICRC medical teams in hospitals and other medical structures across the country is under way. In the course of the week of 11-18 May alone, ICRC medical teams visited about 10 hospitals in Baghdad and seven in the central region of the country. The situation in hospitals does vary widely from one place to the other. There is a clear need for medical supplies in order to treat specific diseases, such as cancer, diabetes or cardiovascular diseases. In order to fill the gap until the central drug-supply system is functioning again, ICRC has just placed a large order for pharmaceuticals to be distributed through the central pharmacy and monitored by ICRC.

One of our main humanitarian concerns relates to the high number of accidents caused by unexploded ordnance and mines and to the potentially disastrous effects of the many weapons and large amounts of ammunition that are easily accessible across the country. In order to disseminate emergency information and to evaluate the situation, an ICRC team recently visited 10 of the country's governorates.

As far as the legal framework is concerned, we are, in terms of international humanitarian law — as has been said before — in a situation of occupation. The applicability of the relevant provisions of the Geneva Conventions, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, and of the Hague Regulation is accepted by the occupying Power. Monitoring the application of these provisions will be one of the tasks of the ICRC.

I thank the Deputy Secretary-General and other colleagues from the United Nations system for their kind words with regard to our institution, and it will be my great pleasure to convey them to our staff.

We are looking forward to cooperating closely with the humanitarian agencies of the United Nations system and with other humanitarian actors while — and the Council is well aware of this — maintaining our full independence with regard to all actors.

The ICRC will strictly respect the principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality in Iraq, as in all other operational contexts. If our organization has been able to conduct its activities for the past 23 years in Iraq, for the past 24 years in Afghanistan, and in many other places, it is because the institution is perceived as neutral, impartial and independent and therefore accepted by the local population and the different groups. Present and active in Iraq for 23 years, the ICRC will continue to assist the Iraqi population, in full respect of its dignity.

The President: I thank the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Kellenberger, for his statement.

I will now open the floor to those Council members wishing to ask questions or to make comments.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to express to you our appreciation for convening this meeting. Our particular appreciation goes also to the Deputy Secretary-General and to Mr. Malloch Brown, Mr. Morris, Mr. Nabarro, Mr. Kastberg and Mr. Kellenberger. We listened very attentively to their briefings, and I should like to reiterate to them all that we share their concerns. We strongly support them in their efforts.

Before I continue, I should like to reiterate the condolences expressed by Ms. Fréchette to the brotherly people of Algeria, who are facing a veritable catastrophe as a result of the earthquake. I should like also to thank the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General for their prompt actions in dealing with that disaster — as if the Arab region did not already have enough disasters to deal with.

The Syrian Arab Republic has made every effort to cooperate with the United Nations agencies represented here today in order to address the severe humanitarian crisis affecting the people of Iraq. We have acceded to all the requests they made. In particular, as I said earlier, we share their grave concern vis-à-vis the lack of security and of law and order in that country. We believe that it is necessary to make every effort to deal with those issues, because, failing that, it will be impossible to achieve the other objectives set, as was eloquently pointed by the representatives of the specialized agencies and the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

As is well known, the Syrian Arab Republic has sent a great deal of humanitarian relief supplies, including medicine and foodstuffs, to the Iraqi people through the specialized agencies. We are confident that the contributions made by the people of Syria to their Iraqi brethren will increase in the coming days.

Among the things that have greatly impressed us as Arabs has been seeing Ms. Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), living with the people of Iraq and the children of Iraq in the difficult circumstances they face. We are confident that these efforts, supported by the United Nations specialized agencies and humanitarian agencies worldwide, will lead to the alleviation of the plight of that people. We pay tribute to Ms. Bellamy and to all the other specialized agencies that have effectively contributed to the alleviation of the suffering of the Iraqi people.

In this meeting we have among us the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and we would like to make reference to the tragic situation of the Kuwaiti prisoners of war and missing persons. We must not forget them, given the fact that the news we have received through the media is a cause for grave concern. We reaffirm anew that there is a need to follow up on this humanitarian question with all the attention it deserves.

I have two brief questions for Mr. Nabarro and Mr. Kastberg. Of course, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization (WHO) are directly supervising the supply of medical and foodstuffs to Iraq under resolution 1472 (2003). What is their assessment of what has been delivered to Iraq to date? What are the bases for the choice of foodstuffs and medical supplies, and what priority is being given to their delivery to Iraq? We would like to know that in order to be able to increase the contributions we can make or that we can encourage through our membership in the Council.

I have a question for Mr. Kastberg about the rate of enrolment of students in elementary and secondary schools. The looting that took place in Iraq has led to veritable disasters in that aspect, in particular in the elementary and secondary schools and in the universities, which were thoroughly looted. What percentage of students have gone back to school, and what is required of the international community and of the oil for food programme to meet the basic requirements for restoring the educational system to an acceptable level — a level that would ensure that future Iraqi generations will not lose a whole school year as a result of these developments?

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): First, I would like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Malloch Brown, Mr. Morris, Mr. Nabarro, Mr. Kastberg and Mr. Kellenberger for their briefings. I would like to make a few comments and pose a few questions.

I think that the presentations we heard this morning make it clear that we are faced with a serious situation. Although the Deputy Secretary-General has assured us that at present there is no humanitarian catastrophe, we feel that the situation indeed gives rise to major concern. As we heard from the representatives of the specialized agencies and programmes, in many important areas — such as food supply, potable water, sanitation, electricity and the health system — effective assistance programmes will have to be developed or implemented in order to prevent a dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian and social and, in the end, the political situation on the ground.

We believe that these tasks have to be tackled without further delay and that the prerequisites for immediate action have to be created. First of all, a

minimum level of security is needed. There is no security so far. We are facing serious looting and other criminal activity. Arms are freely available on virtually every street corner. This situation not only prevents any normal economic activity from developing; it is also a serious impediment to humanitarian assistance, whether through the United Nations or through non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

These acts have to be stopped immediately. If sewage plants have to be protected, we have to protect them. If hospitals are in danger of being looted, we have to make them safe. This is a very important part of the responsibilities of the occupying Powers.

We hear news that some hospitals experienced less looting than others because they were protected by Shiah or Sunni militia. This may create a wrong perception in the Iraqi population that the only way to get security is to rely on and to follow Islamic religious groups. In this context, I would be interested in hearing from the United Nations specialized agencies as to whether they share this concern.

On the issue of security, we cannot expect a great deal of patience from the Iraqi population to let things gradually settle. They have not experienced democracy or the rule of law. They do not know how strong a country governed by the people's will can be. What they see is that the new Power in the country is so far not able to establish public order and security. The initial frustration is already tangible, and if we let radical elements in Iraqi society gain social or political influence, there is a real danger that the Iraqis will turn their backs on the very values that we are trying to promote.

Taking these aspects into account, I would like to ask the representatives of the specialized agencies what they believe to be the motives of the ongoing criminal activity. Is it motivated just by greed, or are we facing acts with a political, or even terrorist, background? In our view, it is obvious that it is necessary to better address the security issue and to curb criminal activities in Iraq. I wonder if the specialized agencies or the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), being on the ground, have any practical advice in this area?

I would also like to reiterate a question that I asked at the last briefing on humanitarian matters in Iraq which pertains to the problems of access to Iraq for certain NGOs. Is the access problem no longer an issue?

I also have a question on cooperation with Iraqi institutions. Could the ICRC and any of the agencies present inform us of their cooperation with Iraqi administrative offices or with the private sector?

According to the Security Council resolution adopted today, a Special Representative of the Secretary-General will be sent to Iraq. One of his major tasks will be the coordination of all humanitarian and reconstruction efforts. What would the humanitarian organizations and agencies expect from this new Special Representative? I think this would also be important for the Deputy Secretary-General to know.

And, finally, I have a question on funding. It is directed to all agencies and NGOs that work on the basis of donations raised by the United Nations flash appeals. We just heard from the Deputy Secretary-General that the flash appeal has brought together, I think, $700 million, and many countries have made donations for humanitarian assistance in Iraq. My country, for instance, has participated with 50 million euros, which equals about $58 million. But, as we heard this morning, the flash appeal is still far from succeeding completely. Now the question is: if no flash money is coming in, can the agencies cope with substantially less funds if they want to reach the goals they outlined this morning?

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her very useful briefing. I would also like to thank the representatives of the United Nations agencies and programmes, which are doing outstanding work in Iraq. I welcome here at the Council table the President of the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), Mr. Jakob Kellenberger.

I would like to support what Ms. Frechette talked about — that is, the heroic work being done by the ICRC in Iraq. This is proof of the importance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in situations such as that of Iraq. My delegation welcomes the fact that the resolution on Iraq just adopted this morning talks about NGOs. This is an excellent thing. Bulgaria, as you know, Sir, is dedicated to close cooperation between the United Nations and NGOs, especially in the humanitarian sphere, where they are often doing irreplaceable work.

It is clear from what we have just heard that the main problem confronting the United Nations and NGOs is to help the Iraqi people and the problem of security. The restoration of security is the best way to help these organizations, and I think that the resolution adopted this morning enables us to make substantial progress in this area.

Bulgaria would like to thank the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ramiro Lopez da Silva. We think he is doing excellent work to improve the quality of the international assistance reaching the Iraqi population.

I would like to make three observations that stem from the experience of some Governments, including that of Bulgaria, and NGOs with respect to the situation in Iraq.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General — who will be appointed soon, let us hope — will need to ensure that the organizations concerned assist potential donors to identify existing needs as quickly as possible and to advise on the means for providing that assistance and on the places where it is most necessary. We think that it is very important to reduce delays in the exchange of information with potential donors.

The second point is that it is clearly important to avoid overlaps in existing structures for the distribution of humanitarian assistance in the areas of transportation and storage, in order to reduce costs to donors and to maximize the amount of available assistance.

The final important point: we fully understand the importance that most organizations present here attach to cash assistance. But assistance in kind is often more readily available. Over time, we have to find a way to benefit from that type of assistance, which might be available more readily and in larger quantities.

In conclusion, I would like to inform the Council that in the days to come, a convoy of humanitarian assistance for a Mosul hospital organized by Bulgarian non-governmental organizations and encouraged and aided by the Government of Bulgaria, will set out for Iraq. It consists mainly of medicine and equipment. It is being organized primarily by the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Red Cross, as well as by the Association of Iraqis in Bulgaria. It is a campaign whose scope will expand in the weeks and months to come.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation expresses its empathy on the occasion of the suffering of the Algerian people, who have recently been so sorely afflicted.

My delegation welcomes the presence at this meeting of the Deputy Secretary-General, who in April 2003 and at the start of this month provided us with information on this subject. We are grateful to her for her important contribution.

My delegation is also grateful to the World Food Programme, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) for the considerable amount of information that they have just provided on the humanitarian situation in Iraq. We thank them most sincerely for their valuable contribution to the only battle worth fighting: the battle for humankind, for real individuals, the battle for the development and the dignity of humankind. The mere presence of those programmes in conflict areas and in areas emerging from conflict sends a message of hope that life has not been abducted but remains.

In particular, Cameroon welcomes the participation at this meeting of the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). His presence is an opportunity to express our appreciation for the outstanding work on the ground since the first day of conflict.

The coalition's military campaign has put an end to a regime whose tyrannical nature has been recognized and censured by all. However, the problems of the martyred Iraqi people are far from being resolved. In the immediate future, restoring security and essential services is a major challenge and a categorical necessity to which we must all respond.

The breakdown of basic services has created a vicious circle that we must quickly break in order to avoid further risk to the humanitarian situation. The link between sanitation, water and health and the link between food, education and health are, of course, evident. Yet, we cannot distinguish between cause and effect in either sector. We believe that the situation reveals what we could call a circular, cumulative causality.

In short, the humanitarian situation in Iraq at present is complex and far-reaching. We have just heard on this question the WHO and the other four major United Nations agencies involved in the implementation of resolution 1472 (2003). In general, considerable progress has been achieved. Certainly, a number of difficulties remain. But thanks to the efforts, the solidarity and the sense of humanity of all, we can hope that the much feared humanitarian catastrophe will not occur.

Following the representatives of the United Nations agencies, I would like to refer to some of the problems discussed.

With respect to insecurity, in particular insecurity on Iraqi roadways, I fear that this may seriously affect food distribution and sanitation services in certain regions, especially in rural areas. In that connection, my delegation would like to have further details on the organization of the distribution of food, medicine and vaccinations in outlying areas. We would also like to know about the nature of the relationship United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations have with tribal leaders in order to best achieve this objective.

With respect to education, we are concerned to note that the school year may have been lost in some regions. Would it not be possible, while conditions are being established to allow for the gradual return to school of children, including young girls, to extend the school year by six to eight weeks? Clearly, the return of children to school will depend upon security, as well as on transport conditions, which in turn will depend upon the provision of fuel.

Before this meeting, the Red Cross had repeatedly referred to, inter alia, the catastrophic situation of the hospitals, which had been vandalized and which lacked water and electricity. We had also noted the serious management problems, such as the lack of leadership in those hospitals, which had resulted in poor strategic planning, coordination and stock management. Could the World Health Organization provide us with more information on that issue?

We have often said that humanitarian, economic and political issues are closely linked. That is especially true in Iraq. Clearly, the close involvement of the Iraqi people in the provision of humanitarian assistance to their country will be the key to the success of that operation. Such involvement should occur in the distribution and, above all, the provision of goods and services. In that regard, it is essential to speed up the process of ensuring that services are provided by Iraqis. That should assist the economic recovery and reduce humanitarian dependence.

In that regard, my delegation believes that the rapid implementation of micro-credit mechanisms could enable women in particular to start up small, simple projects. The men and women of Iraq are well known for their outstanding personal qualities, and we hope that the United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations will help them to regain confidence and to take charge of their own lives. Buying Iraqi products and employing Iraqi people will make that possible.

We have just adopted a new resolution on Iraq that extends for a six-month period the oil-for-food programme, for which the four agencies represented here are the primary partners in the field. We would like to know if those agencies believe that in the coming six months they will be able to carry out the contracts for which they are responsible. How do they see the follow-up? How, for example, does the United Nations Development Programme intend to pursue the project to dredging the port of Um Qasr over the next six months?

The era of Saddam is over. We are all anxious to see how — once basic survival requirements have been met — the Iraqis will take charge of their lives and rebuild their country. Earlier today, after the adoption of resolution 1483 (2003), we said that the international community would be by their side, to support them, not to replace them. We also said that this will require all the external actors — the coalition, the United Nations, Member States and non-governmental organizations — to coordinate their activities, work together and develop cooperative relations, while avoiding inevitably counterproductive competition.

The President: A number of speakers remain on my list. Eleven Council members have yet to speak, after which I hope that we will be able to have the benefit of the responses of our other participants.

I will suspend the meeting now, and we will resume promptly at 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.20 p.m.